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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANAMA 000759

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KMPI](#) [BA](#) [BILAT](#) [POL](#) [REFORM](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR PRESSES MFA FOR FAVORABLE RESOLUTION OF
NDI'S STATUS IN COUNTRY

Classified by Ambassador William T. Monroe for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) In an April 26 meeting, the Ambassador briefed MFA Assistant Under Secretary for Coordination and Follow Up Shaikh Abdul Aziz bin Mubarak Al Khalifa on the status of the MEPI-funded National Democratic Institute (NDI) project in Bahrain. The Ambassador noted that he had requested to meet with Foreign Minister Shaikh Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa to discuss the issue for several weeks, but he had been unable to see Shaikh Khalid due to the Minister's heavy travel schedule. The Ambassador's meeting with Shaikh Abdul Aziz took place as Shaikh Khalid was once again outside the country.

¶2. (C) The Ambassador stressed that Deputy National Security Advisor Abrams was waiting for a written response from Shaikh Khalid on his proposal to resolve NDI's status. He noted that Abrams had met with Minister of Information Abdul Ghaffar in Washington and told him that NDI's leaving the country would be a black eye for Bahrain. Meanwhile, Bahrain Institute for Political Development (BIPD) Secretary General Lulwa Al Awadhi was pressuring NDI representative in Bahrain Fawzi Guleid to retrieve his and his family's passports without a new visa or residency permit. Guleid worried that if he was in possession of the passports, he would be out of status and subject to immediate departure from the country. The Ambassador urged Shaikh Abdul Aziz to work out a solution allowing NDI to remain in the country. At a minimum, Guleid should have his visa renewed while the two governments worked to resolve the status of the program.

¶3. (C) Shaikh Abdul Aziz said, off the record, that there were camps inside the Bahraini government that wanted to expand freedoms and reforms, and others that wanted to reassert government control and slow if not stop the reforms. Although the King sets the direction, he delegates decision-making to the government and his advisors, who interpret his instructions in various ways. In the case of NDI, Shaikh Abdul Aziz said Minister of Royal Court Shaikh Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa (not the Foreign Minister, though they share the same name) is responsible for the decision, but he is influenced by two brothers who are in the reactionary camp - Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and President of the Central Informatics Organization Shaikh Ahmed bin Attiyatallah Al Khalifa and President of the Royal Court Shaikh Mohammed bin Attiyatallah Al Khalifa.

¶4. (C) Shaikh Abdul Aziz promised to consult with Foreign Minister Shaikh Khalid on NDI and respond to the Ambassador's demarche.

¶5. (U) When asked about the status of NDI on Bahrain TV's "Final Word" interview program (broadcast April 28 but recorded earlier), FM Shaikh Khalid responded that the Bahrain Institute for Political Development was still in

talks with NDI, but that both parties had not yet agreed upon an MOU. He stressed that any organization working in Bahrain had to abide by legal regulations, and that ongoing discussions were geared to ensure NDI's complete conformity with Bahraini law.

¶6. (U) BIPD Secretary General Al Awadhi told a press conference April 29 that BIPD was unable to accept NDI's "conditions" for reaching an agreement on the relationship between the two organizations. In response to a question, Al Awadhi said, "NDI was allowed to work in Bahrain during the past elections with a special exception from the Royal Court.

No permit was issued. We are pleased to benefit from the American institute's expertise but on the condition that it abides by rules and regulations." She added, "We had talks with NDI to find a mechanism through which we could codify its work in Bahrain. However, we realized that the institute's desire was to work outside the boundaries of laws. NDI's main objective is to promote democracy, and democracy first and foremost means abiding by the law." Al Awadhi further said that "many observers, politicians, and religious scholars" are suspicious of NDI and its activities.

¶7. (C) NDI representative Guleid told EmbOff April 30 that he had been called to the Immigration Office earlier that day. An immigration investigations officer said "it was his duty" to inform Guleid that his residency has expired and he needed to bring his and his family's passports and airplane tickets to Immigration as soon as possible. Guleid said he would do so but that it could take several days to gather everything. The officer did not display a sense of urgency and asked that Guleid come back as soon as he could to discuss how long he would be permitted to remain in the country to take care of his personal business.

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